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ABSTRACT

This case study, one in a series of research efforts designed to investigate the utilization of the Administration on Aging's research, examines two elder abuse projects whose research was widely disseminated and used. The two studies are first described--one conducted at the University of Maryland's Center on Aging with another at the University of Michigan's Institute of Gerontology. (Both used literature reviews, surveys, and analysis of existing case records to arrive at tentative conclusions about the dimensions of the elder abuse problem.) Section 2 describes the ways in which the new information produced by the studies has been used by federal policymakers, state planners and policymakers, service providers, and the media. Section 3 examines the importance of four propositions about the conditions for research utilization in the case of the elder abuse projects: (1) extensive networking, (2) vigorous dissemination, (3) existence of a large audience of policymakers and practitioners with interest in the topic and a desire to do something about it, and (4) confirmation of study findings by other researchers. In the final section implications for future utilization strategies are suggested. (YLB)

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The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging (AoA)

CASE STUDY NO. 5

Maltreatment and Abuse of the Elderly

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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April 1982

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PREFACE

This case study represents the fifth of several on the usefulness of AoA's research. The purpose of each case study is to show how and why the research was used in policymaking or practice. The case studies are part of the continuing work of the Gerontological Research Institute, which is supported under AoA award No. 90-AR-2173.

The present case study could not have been completed without the assistance of many persons at the federal, state, and local levels, who were interviewed between August 1981 and February 1982. (The list of interviewees may be found at the end of this report.) Especially helpful in this regard were Marilyn R. Block and Richard L. Douglass, principal investigators of the research teams at the University of Maryland and The University of Michigan, respectively, and Saadia Greenberg of the Administration on Aging. We are also grateful to Paul A. Schwarz for his insightful review of the draft, and to Robert K. Yin, whose contributions to earlier case studies in this series (as author and as reviewer) have greatly influenced our thinking about the present case.

Interested readers may also want to refer to the first four case studies: Robert K. Yin and Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 1: Transportation Services for the Elderly*, American Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C., 1980, Robert K. Yin and Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 2: Older Americans Resources and Services (OARS)*, American Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C., 1980, Roberta C. Cronin and Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 3: Volunteer Surveys of Nursing Homes*, American

Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C., 1981, and, Roberta C. Cronin and Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 4: Program Development Handbooks, A Comparison Case,* American Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C., 1981.

CAPSULE SUMMARY

The issue of maltreatment and abuse of the elderly in family settings entered the national spotlight in February 1978, at Congressional hearings on domestic violence. The Administration on Aging, responding to the growing interest in the subject and concerned about the lack of systematic evidence, funded two exploratory studies on the incidence of elder abuse later that year. One team of researchers was located at the University of Maryland Center on Aging, the other at The University of Michigan's Institute of Gerontology.

Both teams carried out their work in 1978-79. The Maryland team focused its primary data collection efforts in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area; the Michigan team (with additional support from the State Department of Social Services) looked at five jurisdictions within their state. Each used a combination of literature review, surveys, and analysis of existing case records to arrive at tentative conclusions about the dimensions of the elder abuse problem.

Both studies confirmed the existence of elder abuse and argued that it merited the attention of policymakers and practitioners. The Maryland team's efforts are documented in *The Battered Elder Syndrome: An Exploratory Study,* by Marilyn R. Block and Jan D. Sinnott. This report includes a comprehensive literature review on intra-family violence, analyses of responses to mail surveys of professionals and of elderly in the community, an outline of policy alternatives and recommendations, and a proposal for a mandatory reporting law.

The final report of the Michigan team, *A Study of Maltreatment of the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Adults,* by Richard L. Douglass, Tom Hickey, and Catherine Noël, includes a

discussion of alternate theoretical frameworks for viewing elder abuse; analyses of the data from surveys of practitioners, professionals, institutions, and two secondary sources (Medicaid and police files); and a set of conclusions and recommendations.

Both the Michigan and the Maryland research was used by federal policymakers, state planners and policymakers, and service providers. At the national level, for example, the elder abuse research informed training and demonstration efforts by the Administration on Aging, was cited in Congressional testimony, and helped lead to an official policy position on elder abuse at the National Retired Teachers Association/American Association of Retired Persons. State agencies and legislatures also used the research in varying ways, for example, in developing a State adult protective services plan, in drafting elder abuse legislation, and educating a task force on elder abuse. Service providers at public and private social service agencies, area agencies on aging, law enforcement agencies, and prosecutor's offices, used the research about elder abuse primarily as background information for activities like information and referral, counseling, legal services, emergency room training, outreach, and workshops. Both projects also attracted considerable media attention, including coverage in national publications like *Newsweek* and the *Christian Science Monitor.*

Thus, the elder abuse projects considered in this case study represent another instance in which AoA-sponsored research has been widely disseminated and used. In contrast to the four projects previously studied (see *Case Study No. 1: Transportation Services for the Elderly, Case Study No. 2: Older Americans Resources and Services (OARS), Case Study No. 3: Volunteer Surveys of Nursing Homes,* and *Case Study No. 4: Program Development Handbooks, A Comparison Case*), however, the present projects primarily produced new information rather than handbooks, manuals, or other tools.

Four propositions about the conditions for research utilization emerged from previous case studies. Two of these propositions, regarding the benefits of extensive networking and vigorous dissemination (Propositions No. 1 and 3 respectively), were equally important to understanding the widespread utilization of the findings of the elder abuse projects. The inclusion in both studies of a synthesis component (Proposition 4) also may have contributed to a lesser degree to the use of research.

But the evidence suggests that there were additional ingredients of successful utilization in the case of the elder abuse projects. Therefore, two new propositions were conceived during this case study to better comprehend the utilization of the elder abuse research.

> *Proposition No. 5: Utilization will occur when there already exists a large audience of policymakers and practitioners with a strong interest in the topic and a desire to do something about it.*
>
> *Proposition No. 6: Utilization is facilitated when the findings of a single study have been confirmed by other researchers.*

The policy implications of these findings for research funding agencies are discussed in a concluding section.

A. TWO STUDIES OF ELDER ABUSE

In February 1978, a University of Delaware researcher, Suzanne Steinmetz, told a Congressional hearing on domestic violence that "the reported battering of parents . . . to 'make them mind' or to change their mind about wills, financial management or signing of other papers is, unfortunately, a growing phenomenon."[1] This testimony, embedded in a prepared statement on overlooked aspects of family violence, provoked a follow-up question from a committee member. It became the sole portion of the hearings to earn coverage in the *New York Times*, as well as a mention from Walter Cronkite. It was not the first published reference to what we now know as "elder abuse," but apparently it was the first to gain such national prominence.[2]

Shortly thereafter, the Commissioner of the Administration on Aging (AoA) requested staff of his research division to incorporate a section on elder abuse in the research priorities for the coming year.[3] Congressional attention to the issue was a factor in the Commissioner's directive. So were the "horror stories" about mistreatment of older persons in institutional or boarding home settings that he heard

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[1]Suzanne K. Steinmetz, Statement before the Hearings of the Subcommittee on Domestic and International Scientific Planning, Analysis, and Cooperation, Committee on Science and Technology, U.S. House of Representatives, February 14-16, 1978.

[2]For examples of earlier mentions, see G.R. Burston's letter to the editor of the *British Medical Journal*, titled "Granny-battering," Vol. 3, September 6, 1975, p. 592 and Robert N. Butler's brief reference to the "battered older person syndrome" in *Why Survive?: Being Old in America*, New York: Harper & Row, 1975, p. 156.

[3]Interview with Saadia Greenberg, Administration on Aging, Washington, D.C., August 25, 1981 and telephone interview with Harry Posman, Administration on Aging, Washington, D.C., October 30, 1981.

in his travels around the country. A reference by a colleague of the Commissioner to a New York study on the inadequacies of incompetence hearings also played a role. Concerned by the limited depth and scope of most discussions of elder abuse and their reliance on anecdotal evidence, the Commissioner was interested in having AoA take a more dispassionate and thoughtful look at the issue.[4]

As a result, when AoA released its Title IV-B *Guidelines for Research and Development Projects in Aging* for Fiscal Year 1978, the guidelines included "Researchable Question H-3: What is the incidence of maltreatment of elderly persons?" The background statement noted that:

> Instances abound in which functionally impaired or socially isolated elderly are deprived of informed consent in decisions about their lives, are neglected or are mentally or physically abused. There are numerous reports that document violations of the human rights of such vulnerable elderly in their homes, in congregate living arrangements, and in institutions. What is unknown is the incidence of such occurrences for different types of abuse and neglect.[5]

The Guidelines went on to request a short-term exploratory study. The study should assess the current state of knowledge about the maltreatment of older persons, develop a conceptual framework suitable for policy, program, and research purposes, and test the feasibility of various technical approaches to determining the incidence of maltreatment. The level of effort was set at $100,000 for nine months. The deadline for submissions was July 28, 1978.

AoA had intended to fund only one study about elder abuse. Instead, because the Guidelines generated an unexpectedly low number of submissions overall, and because there were two closely ranked and complementary proposals for research on elder abuse, AoA made two awards. These went to the teams of Marilyn R. Block and Jan D. Sinnott at The University of Maryland Center on Aging, and Richard L. Douglass and Tom Hickey at The University of Michigan's Institute of Gerontology.

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[4]Telephone interview with Robert Benedict, Temple University Institute on Aging, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 20, 1981.

[5]1978 Guidelines, p. 58.

The awards were made in September 1978. By the close of 1979, with results in hand, both research teams found themselves at the core of a small group of experts on a "new" and popular topic. The remainder of this case study looks at the way in which the results of these two pieces of research found their way into the public arena and the ways in which they were used. In the final sections, we consider the reasons such utilization occurred and discuss the implications for AoA in its efforts to promote research utilization in the future.

The Research Projects

The Maryland study. Marilyn R. Block, the Principal Investigator for the Maryland project, twice before had attempted to pursue research on elder abuse — once in a proposal to the National Institute on Aging and, later, via a proposal to her dissertation committee. Both times she was unsuccessful in convincing her audience that it was a topic worth investigating. Thus, the opportunity to carry out research on elder abuse for AoA struck a responsive chord.[6]

The Block-Sinnott proposal to AoA described two major components to their effort:

- a comprehensive review of the literature on intra-family violence, for its applicability to elder abuse; and
- a test of three approaches to gathering additional data on elder abuse — one a search of extant case records, another a mail survey of professionals who deal with older persons, and the third, a mail survey of elderly in the community.

The Maryland team was awarded $95,941 to carry out a 12-month effort. Cost-sharing by the University, in the form of time contributed by senior staff of the Center on Aging, was valued at an additional $5,441.

The Maryland project was implemented as planned. All three strategies for data collection were tested in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The first strategy was the least productive. The researchers tried to arrange for access to the case files of a number of agencies, including law enforcement, adult protective, and human service agencies,

[6]Interview with Marilyn R. Block, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, August 20, 1981.

but only one agreed. The second strategy was a survey of professionals, directed to 159 emergency physicians, 132 members of the American Psychological Association, and 136 members of the Gerontological Society in Maryland. A total of 134 professionals, mostly service providers, responded (a response rate of 31.4 percent). The third strategy was a mail survey of elderly in the community. Respondents were randomly chosen from 11 census tracts in the SMSA that were known to be nationally representative in terms of proportion of elderly residents and several other demographic characteristics. In the early part of 1979, 443 elderly persons were contacted. Of these, 73 responded (a response rate of 16.5 percent). All together, 26 cases of abuse were reported by the 207 individuals and the one agency that responded to the various data collection efforts.

The results of the study were reported in *The Battered Elder Syndrome: An Exploratory Study*, edited by Block and Sinnott.[7] The report is a collection of papers, including several literature reviews, an analysis of the experience and results of the three data collection efforts, a discussion of policy alternatives and recommendations, and a proposal for a mandatory reporting law. Based on the data obtained, Block and Sinnott concluded that:

> The existence of elder abuse has been confirmed and a preliminary estimate of the numbers of these cases has been obtained . . . . In general, the abused elder appears to be a severely disabled, older-than-average, white, middle-class woman who is psychologically abused by her own relatives in spite of her attempts to end that abuse by seeking help through "normal channels."[8]

The authors suggest that elder abuse may be as frequent nationwide as child abuse (but less common than spouse abuse). Their proposals for legal intervention are informed by a consideration of prior legal efforts in the child abuse area, and include provisions for collecting additional evidence on incidence.

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[7]The full reference is Marilyn R. Block and Jan D. Sinnott (Eds.), *The Battered Elder Syndrome: An Exploratory Study*, College Park, Maryland: Center on Aging, University of Maryland, November 1979. Other contributors to the volume are Suzanne Sedge, Susan Hennessey, and Janice L. Davidson.

[8]*Op. cit.*, p. 84.

The 133-page report was completed in November 1979 and 4,000 copies were printed by the Center on Aging. (The original project budget had set aside $5,000 for printing, publicity, and dissemination.) Copies of the report were sent directly to a variety of agencies that were thought to have an interest in aging and/or violence, including regional offices and state offices on aging. Advertisements stating that the report was available free of charge were also placed in ten relevant journals, including *Aging* magazine, *Journal of Family Issues*, and *Victimology*. In late November, the University's public information office issued a press release about the study, and the principal investigator made the first formal presentation of the findings at the Gerontological Society meeting in Washington, D.C. Within a matter of days, Block was inundated with calls from the press. Both the *New York Times* and the *Baltimore Sun* carried stories about the research on December 2; in the next several weeks, several other papers, radio, and television stations followed suit.[9] Since then, media coverage of the study has continued, although at a less furious pace. Nine months after the release of the report, three more television appearances were on the research team's schedule.[10]

The Center on Aging has received numerous requests for the report and only a few hundred copies remain from the initial printing. Because both the AoA grant and the Center's support for the dissemination effort have been exhausted, the Center now solicits a donation to pay for postage or a prepaid envelope from those who request the report. No reprinting is envisioned.

The research team has not sought any additional support from AoA or other sources to continue work on elder abuse. However, since the study was completed, the principal investigator has made eight presentations around the country at conferences on elder abuse or victimization and has given testimony at a field hearing of the U.S. House Select Committee on Aging in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Several of the conferences were sponsored by AoA, through grants or contracts, and she received partial support (travel and per diem) for her participation. She also has two publications based on the elder abuse research in press.

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[9]See Appendix A for a list of known media coverage generated by the project.

[10]Interview with Marilyn R. Block, University of Maryland, College Park, August 20, 1981.

The Michigan study. AoA's second award under the 1978 Guidelines for research on elder abuse went to the Co-Principal Investigators Richard L. Douglass and Tom Hickey at The University of Michigan. Catherine Noël was the third key member of the Michigan team, which at its peak numbered ten full- and part-time staff. The team received $100,130 on September 28, 1978, to cover a nine-month effort.

Like the Maryland group, the Michigan team's interest in abuse of the elderly predated AoA's announcement of research priorities. The preceding year, Douglass, Hickey, and Harold Johnson, Director of the Institute of Gerontology, began discussing the "vulnerable" elderly, and wondered whether patterns of abuse like those described in the literature on another vulnerable population — children — had been found among older persons. A check of the research literature yielded very little.[11]

Early in 1978, at about the same time the Steinmetz testimony made the news, the team put together a prospectus for a four-county pilot study of elder abuse in Michigan. They sent it to a legislator on the Michigan House of Representatives' Social Services Committee who was sponsoring new adult protective services legislation; to the House Fiscal Agency; to the Director of the State's Office on Aging; and to a staff member of the Office of Adult and Family Services, in the Michigan Department of Social Services. The prospectus was intended to lay the groundwork for discussions that might eventually lead to a proposal.[12]

Nothing came of this immediately, but in the meantime, the AoA Guidelines were announced. The team submitted a grant application to AoA in which they proposed: (1) to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature that would encompass sources on domestic abuse and institutional maltreatment; (2) to survey a cross-section of direct-service professionals and practitioners in three Michigan jurisdictions about their experience and practice regarding elder neglect and/or abuse; (3) to obtain information on services currently available and, where possible, case data; and (4) to examine secondary data on reported crimes against the

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[11]Interview with Richard L. Douglass, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, September 16, 1981.

[12]Memorandum from Richard L. Douglass to Representative John Mowatt, Kevin Seitz, Elizabeth Ferguson, and Laura Hardey, April 19, 1978.

elderly from the Detroit Police Department. All these components were implemented, with the largest effort being devoted to the survey of professionals and practitioners, known as the "domestic study." Respondents included police, physicians, social work and health professionals, lawyers, mental health workers, judges, clergy, and morticians. In deference to AoA's concern for institutional populations, the research team also interviewed administrators and a sample of staff from 12 nursing homes and examined 1977 intake data on Medicaid patients admitted to nursing homes in one county.[13]

The methodology of the Michigan team varied in several respects from the Maryland approach. The Michigan team used face-to-face interviews to collect their survey data, while the Maryland team used mail-out questionnaires. Only the Maryland team surveyed the elderly; only the Michigan team included a survey of institutional staff and administrators. The focus of the survey questions also was somewhat different for the two studies. The Maryland team's survey questions were case-specific (i.e., they requested a report of the characteristics of the specific case(s) known, the abuser involved, and the victim of the abuse); the Michigan study's field survey inquired whether the professionals or practitioners interviewed had any experience with various kinds of maltreatment of the elderly, the general characteristics and frequency of each kind, and presumed causes. Whereas the Maryland report described the abuser and the abused, the Michigan study portrayed primarily the abuse. Finally, the two studies focused on different geographic regions.

One significant modification to the Michigan study occurred in midstream. In early 1979, the team obtained an additional $66,866 from the Michigan Department of Social Services (MDSS) to expand the domestic study from three to five jurisdictions. These funds came from a pool of $200,000 appropriated by the Michigan legislature for the development of an adult protective services plan for the state. To satisfy the state's needs, the Michigan team expanded the domestic survey in all five jurisdictions to also cover abuse of the mentally retarded, emotionally impaired, and physically handicapped. AoA agreed to this modification.

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[13]The team had intended to look at adult foster care environments as well, but gave up in the face of strong opposition from the Adult Foster Care Administrators Association.

Work on the Michigan study was eventually extended through November 1979 (at no additional cost to MDSS or to AoA). The final report, *A Study of Maltreatment of the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Adults*, was completed and sent to both sponsors in December.[14] It includes a discussion of alternate theoretical frameworks for viewing elder abuse; analyses of the data from the domestic study, the institutional survey, and two secondary sources (Medicaid files and Detroit police files); and a set of conclusions and recommendations for policy and program development and for further research.

There were 228 responses to the domestic survey. From an analysis of these responses and from anecdotes related in the field, Douglass, Hickey, and Noël concluded that abuse of vulnerable adults, while not pervasive, is known to the majority of professionals in the sample. "The range of types of maltreatment extends from . . . lack of attention to serious physical, emotional or verbal abuse . . . ." with physical abuse the least frequently reported.[15] (About 39% of the respondents had no experience with physical abuse.)[16] The authors emphasize that incidence and prevalence are not adequately measured by these exploratory efforts:

> It will be necessary to conduct many more investigations in order to adequately define, predict and measure the incidence of neglect and abuse of vulnerable adults. This research is a necessary step before major social and health care programs can be designed and implemented.[17]

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[14]The full reference is Richard L. Douglass, Tom Hickey, and Catherine Noël, *A Study of Maltreatment of the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Adults*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute of Gerontology, University of Michigan, November 1979. The study also produced an interim report dated June 1979, with authorship and title identical to the final report. The interim report was sent only to the sponsors. It reports preliminary analyses of the domestic survey data.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 90.

[16]Because of differences in methodology and reporting of analyses, it is difficult to compare incidence results across the two studies. In general, Michigan respondents were more likely to report familiarity with instances of abuse than the Maryland respondents. Physical abuse was seen as the least common form of abuse in both studies.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

As interim policy and program measures, the authors encourage such steps as mandatory reporting and monitoring systems, special training for adult-protective service workers, and emphasis on preventive and "least disruptive" interventions.

The Michigan team disseminated their 175-page report mostly in response to requests. Contrary to the practice of the Maryland group, only a small group of people, including advisory board members, received an initial direct mailing. The co-investigators did make presentations based on the findings at the November 1979 meetings of the Gerontological Society and the American Public Health Association. The *Christian Science Monitor* covered the Michigan study together with the Maryland study in the December 5, 1979 issue. Both studies also were mentioned in the February 18, 1980 issue of *Newsweek*. Most of the media attention that the project received came later, however, after the university issued a press release about the study on March 12, 1980.[18] At this writing, requests for interviews and written materials continue to come in. About 500 copies of the full report have been distributed by the Michigan team.

Because the project had not budgeted funds for mass printing, the Institute of Gerontology eventually was forced to charge for duplicating the report. To those who could not afford a copying fee, staff provided copies of the summary and conclusions, or copies of relevant conference papers or book chapters. In addition, they began forwarding requests for the full report to the AoA project officer, who estimates he himself copied and distributed 30 to 40 copies.[19]

The Michigan team has made one attempt to obtain additional funding for research on elder abuse. This was a proposal for a follow-on "validation study," which was submitted to AoA in September 1979, in response to the 1979 research guidelines. Although elder abuse was not a priority in that year's guidelines, the Michigan team believed, on the basis of conversations with AoA staff, that a systematic

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[18]See Appendix A for a listing of known media coverage generated by the research.

[19]Interviews with Richard L. Douglass, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, September 16, 1981, and Saadia Greenberg, Administration on Aging, Washington, D.C., August 25, 1981.

research effort that went beyond the pilot stage might get a favorable hearing. The proposal was not funded, however.[20]

Like the principal investigator of the Maryland study, the Michigan co-investigators have remained active in disseminating their findings. Since January 1980, Douglass or Hickey have given testimony or made conference presentations on 17 occasions, have published three articles, and have two book chapters and one article in press. As was true for the Maryland study, some of the opportunities for conference presentations were made possible through other AoA support.

The Elder Abuse Projects As a Case Study of Research Utilization

The primary product of the two elder abuse studies was new information. Unlike the research efforts examined in four previous case studies,[21] the Michigan and Maryland projects did not result in "usable tools" for practitioners, such as questionnaires, handbooks, or how-to manuals. The elder abuse studies were "research" rather than "development" projects. In Section B, we shall describe the ways in which the information provided by this Title IV-B research has been used. In Section C, we shall examine the applicability of the propositions about utilization that emerged from our case studies of "development" projects to the current, different case. In Section D, we shall suggest a few implications for future utilization strategies.

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[20]Interview with Richard L. Douglass, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, September 16, 1981.

[21]See Robert K. Yin & Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 1: Transportation Services for the Elderly*, Washington, D.C.: American Institutes for Research (AIR), September 1980; Robert K. Yin & Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 2: Older Americans Resources and Services (OARS)*, Washington, D.C.: American Institutes for Research, November 1980; Roberta C. Cronin & Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 3: Volunteer Surveys of Nursing Homes*, Washington, D.C.: American Institutes for Research, May 1981; and Roberta Cronin & Ingrid Heinsohn, *The Uses of Research Sponsored by the Administration on Aging, Case Study No. 4: Program Development Handbooks, A Comparison Case*, Washington, D.C.: American Institutes for Research, September 1981. Hereinafter cited as *Case Study No. 1, Case Study No. 2*, etc.

B. USES MADE OF THE ELDER ABUSE STUDIES

To learn more about the ways in which the new information generated by these AoA-supported efforts came to be known and applied, we conducted a series of interviews with users. The majority of the names of interviewees were drawn from the projects' correspondence files, especially from requests for the final report. Others were suggested by the principal investigators, who were asked in personal interviews to recall specific instances of utilization of which they are aware. The sample was not selected to be representative of all the uses made of the research, because the extent of utilization was not our primary interest. However, we did aim for a diverse group of users — encompassing policymakers, planners, and practitioners at federal, state, and local levels.[22]

A number of interviewees who had used one or the other of the reports had trouble specifying how they had "used" it. The research had "just provided background." This parallels the experience of other studies of the utilization process. Decisionmakers often have difficulty citing direct and instrumental uses of research in policy formulation because the influence of research "is exercised in more subtle ways than the word 'utilization' — with its overtone of tools and implements — can capture."[23] We encountered this reaction much less frequently in our earlier case studies, which focused on "development" projects.

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[22]Researchers per se were not represented deliberately because their use of the research is peripheral to our purpose in this series of case studies.

[23]Carol H. Weiss, "Knowledge Creep and Decision Accretion," *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (March 1980), p. 381. Also see Michael Quinn Patton, et al., "In Search of Impact: An Analysis of the Utilization of Federal Health Evaluation Research," in Carol H. Weiss (Ed.), *Using Social Research in Public Policy-Making*, Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1977, pp. 141-163.

We now consider in turn the utilization of the elder abuse studies by federal policymakers, by state planners and policymakers, and by service providers as in the earlier studies. We shall also consider a fourth category of users — the media — that did not emerge as an important category in earlier case studies. The varieties of use that have been made of the findings are conveyed by illustrative vignettes.

Uses by Federal Policymakers

As noted in an earlier case study, policy is made incrementally from sources that include both research-based and nonresearch-based information.[24] Attributing a specific policy outcome to any single input is risky. However it is clear that the elder abuse research projects helped to stimulate action by both AoA and Congress, and by at least one major national association representing older persons.

AoA played a major role in disseminating the findings by funding a review of elder abuse literature entitled *Elder Abuse* (DHHS Publication No. OHDS 81-20152, May 1980) that included summaries of the two reports. This review was prepared under a contract with AoA's National Clearinghouse on Aging, by the Franklin Research Center. It contains a review of these and two other studies of elder abuse.[25] AoA's Research Division contributed the preface. Originally, it was distributed free of charge by AoA and by the Library and Statutory Distribution Service of the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). But the document has been a popular one — GPO's initial printing of 7,000 copies is exhausted. In the future, GPO will charge $4.25 for the 58-page review, as will AoA's Service Center on Aging Information (SCAN).[26] The two AoA studies also were covered in *Older American News* (an insert in the Office of Human Development Services newspaper) and in AoA's *Aging* magazine.

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[24]Yin and Heinsohn, *Case Study No. 1*, p. 10.

[25]The other two were: Elizabeth E. Lau and Jordan I. Kosberg, "Abuse of the Elderly by Informal Care Providers," in *Aging*, September-October 1979, and a set of three 1979 reports by the team of James G. Bergman, Karen Myers, Helen O'Malley, Howard Segars and others about the work of Legal Research and Services for the Elderly, Boston, Massachusetts.

[26]Telephone interview with Peter Halpin, Administration on Aging, Washington, D.C., November 5, 1981.

In addition to disseminating the findings, AoA also used the information. Two of AoA's other divisions carried out follow-up activities, as described in the following vignettes:

Vignette #1

In July 1980, AoA's Continuing Education and Training Division awarded $55,000 to Legal Research and Services for the Elderly (LRSE) in Boston to conduct two major conferences on elder abuse. The conferences were held in Cambridge, Massachusetts on March 23-25, 1981 and in San Francisco on April 1-3, 1981. The conferences were conceived to provide an opportunity to bring the pieces of research evidence on elder abuse together with the experience and insights of practitioners and researchers in related areas. The two conferences involved a total of about 300 attendees and 100 presenters from multiple disciplines and work settings, including authorities on child abuse and domestic violence. Marilyn Block served on the project's advisory board and made presentations about the Maryland research at both sessions; Richard Douglass participated in the Cambridge session.[27]

Vignette #2

In 1980, AoA's Demonstration Division requested proposals for model projects on elder abuse as part of a general solicitation directed to state and area agencies on aging. In preparing the solicitation, demonstration staff reviewed both the Maryland and Michigan studies and consulted with the staff of the research division. Although research division staff felt that not enough was known to frame model approaches to elder abuse, the demonstration staff believed that some interim action was needed. Three awards were made in October 1980 to grantees in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York. The model projects deal with case finding, case assessments, meeting crisis need, and making referrals to appropriate services. These efforts are scheduled to continue through December 1983.[28]

In Congress, the House Select Committee on Aging, chaired by U.S. Representative Claude Pepper (D-FL), has had a continuing interest in the problems of elder abuse. As the following vignette shows, the two AoA studies have contributed to the policy debate at this level on more than one occasion.

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[27]Telephone interviews with Donald Clapp, Administration on Aging, Washington, D.C., October 30, 1981 and James Bergman, Legal Research and Services for the Elderly, Boston, Massachusetts, November 10, 1981.

[28]Telephone interview with Nancy Wartow, Administration on Aging, Washington, D.C., November 5, 1981.

Vignette #3

> The House Select Committee's concern with elder abuse dates from the congressional testimony of Suzanne Steinmetz early in 1978. In 1979-80, various members held field hearings in Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey to follow up on the issue, and the full committee held joint hearings with the Senate Special Committee on Aging on June 11, 1980.[29] In April of the following year, the committee staff published a staff report on elder abuse.[30]
>
> Both the Maryland and Michigan studies were cited in testimony at the June 1980 hearing and in briefing material prepared by the committee's staff. The Michigan study also was cited in the committee's 1981 report. Partly as a result of the findings of these studies, as well as the committee's own data-gathering efforts, the committee suggested to AoA in 1980 that a national survey be considered. Subsequently, committee staff participated in the two AoA-sponsored conferences on elder abuse in Cambridge and San Francisco, and the committee held hearings at each. Marilyn Block testified at the Cambridge hearing. The second conference was used as an occasion to distribute the committee's report. Chairman Pepper and committee member Mary Rose Oakar (D-Ohio) co-sponsored an elder abuse bill last year and expect to reintroduce it with additional sponsors in 1982.[31]

Another illustration of the use of the Maryland and Michigan research by Congress can be seen in a vignette from the district office of one House Select Committee member.

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[29]U.S. Congress, Joint Hearing before the Special Committee on Aging, U.S. Senate, and the Select Committee on Aging, U.S. House of Representatives, *Elder Abuse*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 11, 1980.

[30]U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Aging, *Elder Abuse (An Examination of a Hidden Problem)*, Committee Publication No. 97-277, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 3, 1981.

[31]Telephone interview with Kathleen Gardner, U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Aging, Washington, D.C., October 30, 1981.

Vignette #4

> Stimulated by the exploratory work of Elizabeth Lau and Jordan Kosberg at nearby Case Western Reserve University, U.S. Representative Mary Rose Oakar has taken a special interest in elder abuse. In addition to co-sponsoring legislation in her capacity as a member of the House Select Committee on Aging, she has participated in hearings on elder abuse. Her Cleveland, Ohio office has been active in collecting relevant research literature on abuse of older persons and in distributing information to others interested in the issue. Her staff report that the AoA Clearinghouse publication on *Elder Abuse* has been especially helpful in providing background for their work. The office also has disseminated a number of copies of the AoA publication, along with committee hearing reports, in response to requests for information.[32]

The two elder abuse studies also have been used at the national level in the private sector by a national association with a membership of 13 million.

Vignette #5

> The publicity given to the Maryland study, the proximity of its research team, and the personal interest of a board member all were influential in making elder abuse one of the concerns of the National Retired Teachers Association/American Association of Retired Persons (NRTA/AARP). As a result, the studies by Block and Sinnott and by Douglass, Hickey, and Noël have been used in multiple ways by the national headquarters of NRTA/AARP.
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> The criminal justice section of NRTA/AARP, which functions as a clearinghouse for criminal justice resources, has mailed short bibliographies — listing both of the AoA-funded reports — to a variety of people who have requested information on elder abuse. According to a senior program specialist with the section, these requests have come from law enforcement personnel, as well as students and persons who work specifically with older persons. In some cases, staff have referred inquiries directly to Block or Douglass. In addition, the section incorporated a summary of the Block and Sinnott report in a training manual for law enforcement personnel, *Law Enforcement and Older Persons: Revised Edition.* The development of the manual was funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Since its completion in May 1980, about 1000 copies of the manual have been distributed free of charge to police

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[32]Telephone interview with Carol Miller, Office of U.S. Representative Mary Rose Oakar, Cleveland, Ohio, October 28, 1981.

and sheriff's departments, law enforcement training academies, criminal justice departments in educational institutions, district attorneys, major law enforcement and criminal justice organizations and associations, and 18 foreign countries.

NRTA/AARP's 1981 Legislative Council also adopted a position on elder abuse. Following ratification by the Board of Directors, this position was included in the organization's handbook on *1981 Federal Legislative Policy and 1980-1981 Joint State Legislative Committee Policy Guidelines,* which is distributed to about 15,000 policy leaders of NRTA/AARP nationwide. The position was taken after much internal debate in which available research was used to develop a "pro and con" paper. In the process, Marilyn Block made a presentation on her research in a staff seminar. The statement that was adopted advocates federal encouragement of activities such as research, education and training, and improved reporting of abuse cases. Because there was a consensus that the research on the problem is still limited, the position includes a statement that the federal government should encourage state and local governments to enact and enforce adult protection legislation "if the nature and magnitude of the problem warrant . . . "[33] At the national office level, the adoption of an official position means that staff may now participate in congressional hearings if the occasion arises.

Finally, the NRTA/AARP library featured the Block and Sinnott research on the front page of its accessions newsletter; the accession of the Douglass, Hickey, and Noël report was noted in a later issue. The newsletter has a circulation list of 58, which includes libraries, gerontological research programs, the House and Senate Committees on Aging, several associations, and a few state and area agencies.[34]

Uses by State Planners and Policymakers

State agencies and legislatures also have turned their attention to the problems of older persons who are abused or maltreated. Research evidence has proved equally useful at this level, as several utilization experiences show. Our first vignette comes from Michigan, the state which co-sponsored the Douglass, Hickey, and Noël effort.

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[33]*Op. cit.*, n.d., p. 61.

[34]Telephone interviews with Mary Crow on October 21 and November 11, 1981, and with Betsy Willson-Messer, on October 28, 1981 — both of NRTA/AARP, Washington, D.C.

Vignette #6

The Michigan research was useful above all because it supported the direction that the state was already taking on the elder abuse issue, according to a representative of the Michigan Department of Social Services (MDSS), and also the former head of Michigan's office on aging (both members of the advisory board for the Michigan study). The data and conclusions generated by Douglass, Hickey, and Noël complemented those from several other research efforts undertaken by MDSS in order to develop a State Adult Protective Services Plan. Although the Michigan final report was not available until after the plan was completed in September 1979, the study's recommendations were quite consistent with those of the state plan.

The MDSS representative suggested that the findings also lent academic credibility to the efforts to revise the state's current adult protective statute, and may have helped keep them alive. (Douglass testified before a hearing of the Michigan State Senate Social Services Committee and provided comments on several drafts of the bill to its sponsor.) The former director of aging services noted some barriers to utilization of the research, however — first, the state is in a period of fiscal retrenchment and second, the findings themselves are exploratory and tentative. She felt that AoA's failure to follow up with a more definitive study, coupled with the Michigan investigators' cautious interpretation of their results, may have contributed to the absence of legislative change so far.[35]

Vignette #7

The legal services developer for the Wisconsin Bureau of Aging believes that the utility of the Michigan and Maryland studies lay in the revelation of how little is known about elder abuse. This apparent lack of knowledge, coupled with a presentation she heard Douglass make at the Cambridge conference in March 1980, led to her involvement in drafting state legislation that is oriented toward gathering additional data on the problem of elder abuse. She believes that interest in elder abuse in Wisconsin began with the national press coverage citing research on the issue in 1980; this issue drew considerable local attention. Although she initiated the legislative effort, she feels that the bill's legislative sponsor would have taken some action even without her involvement.[36]

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[35]Telephone interviews with Theodore De Wolf, Michigan Department of Social Services, Lansing, Michigan, October 14, 1981 and Elizabeth Ferguson, Developmental Disabilities Council, Lansing, Michigan, October 22, 1981.

[36]Telephone interview with Sheilah O. Jakobson, Wisconsin Bureau of Aging, Madison, Wisconsin, October 15, 1981.

Vignette #8

The office of Indiana State Representative James Jontz requested a copy of the Michigan study, after it was cited in an *Indianapolis News* article reprinted from the *Boston Globe*. The legislator, who has been involved in a variety of aging issues, was gathering evidence that might illuminate the extent of the abuse problem and inform efforts to obtain legislation. He later supported an elder abuse bill that passed the Indiana legislature during the last session.[37]

Vignette #9

The research and planning department of the Bureau of Maine's Elderly began looking at elder abuse problems in Spring 1980. Interest had been stimulated by the increasing press coverage of the issue, and a recognition that Maine had many potential risk factors, e.g., high rates of alcohol abuse, rural population, and low incomes. Early on, the research and planning associate in charge of the effort acquired copies of the full Block and Sinnott report and excerpts from the Douglass, Hickey, and Noël work. Through attendance at the AoA-sponsored conference on elder abuse in Cambridge and through the process of collecting bibliographic materials, she had identified both reports as important resources. She has used both studies as background, and cited them in a variety of presentations. She also has included the work in a bibliography that she has shared with others, including some of Maine's area agencies on aging.

The associate now chairs a task force on elder abuse for the state, which is reviewing all state legislation bearing on abuse problems and is trying to build a base for legislation or other statewide efforts on the issue. The task force represents law enforcement, mental health, aging, social service and other relevant disciplines and agencies.

In addition to these efforts, the research and planning department also has collected some general information from the AAAs on their experiences with elder abuse, has backed a modification to the state's adult protection law (unsuccessfully so far), has acted as an advocate in individual abuse cases, and has cooperated with a statewide survey put together by the Bureau's advisory committee.[38]

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[37]Telephone Interview with Michael Thrall, Office of Indiana State Representative James Jontz, Indianapolis, Indiana, October 14, 1981.

[38]Telephone interview with Natalie Dunlap, Bureau of Maine's Elderly, Augusta, Maine, October 28, 1981.

Uses by Service Providers

A third group of users of the Maryland and Michigan studies consists of agencies that are involved in serving older persons and/or the general public. These include public and private social service agencies, area agencies on aging, law enforcement agencies, and prosecutor's offices. A sample of vignettes drawn from interviews with staff of these agencies follows.

Vignette #10

The head of the St. Petersburg Police Department's Crime Prevention for the Elderly project requested and received a copy of the Block and Sinnott report in Spring 1980, after learning of it through a newsletter. She used the report as background information for project work, to suggest types of referrals and ways of dealing with abuse problems. In particular, the Crime Prevention for the Elderly project dealt with the "Neighborly Centers" where meals and other senior services are provided. Stories of abuse, theft of checks and property, etc. filtered in from these sites; because of the awareness generated by the Block study, the case workers were able to evaluate and refer the complaints. She still uses her copy as a reference at her new position, as information specialist for the City of St. Petersburg's Public Information Office.[39]

Vignette #11

The Victim/Witness Assistance Unit of the Office of the State's Attorney in Upper Marlboro, Maryland learned of the Block and Sinnott study through an announcement in the *NOVA* (National Organization for Victim Assistance) *Newsletter.* After initial circulation within the unit, the final report was filed in the library. Although no case of elder abuse has surfaced since the report was received, the unit plans to use it as background for: dealing with a victim when prosecuting a case; offering emotional support for the abused elder; and helping victims overcome negative feelings while testifying.[40]

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[39]Telephone interview with Beverly Clark Buggle, Information Specialist, City of St. Petersburg Public Information Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, October 26, 1981.

[40]Telephone interview with Carol Hess, Victim/Witness Assistance Unit, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, October 22, 1981.

Vignette #12

A social worker at Johns Hopkins Hospital recalls hearing about the Michigan study as a result of the national conference on elderly abuse in Massachusetts in March, 1981. She has since encouraged the use of the study's report as background reading and as a source for a typology of elder abuse. She finds it to be a valuable tool for in-service emergency room training, especially in helping staff to recognize active and passive neglect.[41]

Vignette #13

The community organizer for the Southwest Pennsylvania Area Agency on Aging attended a seminar in the summer of 1981 at which Marilyn Block spoke, mentioning the availability of her report. The community organizer ordered the report and disseminated it among the paralegals and advocates in the agency's legal services department. She perceives that its greatest value is in giving case workers ideas about what to expect. Domiciliary case workers, especially, use the report for general information and as background for investigating complaints (e.g., in boarding homes).[42]

Vignette #14

In Inkster, Michigan, the director of the local Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was inspired by the final report of the Michigan project to develop a community task force on elder abuse. The group, composed of 17 representatives from local organizations, refers local residents to appropriate social service agencies. The director also used the Michigan report to gather support from the local prosecutor, the police department, and local hospitals for the new referral and intervention procedures. (Douglass himself testified before the task force in April 1980.) In the future, the task force plans to establish a volunteer peer counseling service in housing units for the elderly.[43]

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[41]Telephone interview with Marilyn Anikis, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland. December 9, 1981.

[42]Telephone interview with Kathy McCain, Southwest Pennsylvania Area Agency on Aging, Washington, Pennsylvania, October 28, 1981.

[43]Telephone interview with Florence Kurtz, RSVP, Inkster, Michigan, December 8, 1981.

Vignette #15

The Director of the San Francisco Family Service Agency used the Block and Sinnott study as the basis of a proposal for an elderly abuse prevention program, developed jointly with a coalition of area agencies on aging. Although the initial proposal failed, a board of directors has been set up for the coalition. They are committed to acquiring money for the program and are making application to various private foundations for funding. The director feels the Block and Sinnott report has ground-breaking significance. Ten percent of the agency's outreach clients are abused elders, and the report has made his agency aware of the necessity for better legal services for this group.[44]

Vignette #16

The Director of the Marietta-Cobb Community Service Center was working on a pilot program on elderly abuse in metropolitan Atlanta when she saw mention of the Michigan study in the National Council on the Aging's newsletter. She ordered the report for background for a public information workshop in November 1981. The workshop dealt with Georgia's new adult protective service act and with elder abuse issues in general.[45]

Vignette #17

The Director of Psychological Services at the Arizona Department of Economic Security became aware of the Block and Sinnott study via two sources, the *Child Protection Report* and the *American Psychological Association Monitor*. The agency's adult protective service unit, which deals with abused elderly, uses the report as an educational tool in training social workers. The Director used the final report (especially the review of child, spouse, and elderly abuse literature) as background for a book on domestic violence. The study was equally useful as a supporting document at a research conference on family violence during the summer of 1980. The director also brought the study to the attention of the State Senate.[46]

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[44]Telephone interview with Ira Okin, San Francisco Family Service Agency, San Francisco, California, October 29, 1981.

[45]Telephone interview with Linda Pearson, Marietta-Cobb Community Service Center, Marietta, Georgia, December 9, 1981.

[46]Telephone interview with Frank G. Bolton, Arizona Department of Economic Security, Phoenix, Arizona, October 28, 1981.

Vignette #18

> The Assistant Director of the San Francisco Child Abuse Council heard of the Block and Sinnott study through the *Child Protection Report*, a bimonthly publication produced in Washington, D.C. While making most extensive use of the study's review of the child abuse literature in her everyday work, she has also taken up the cause of abused elderly. The Maryland study cohesively links all types of domestic violence, and this makes it a good resource for presentations, according to the assistant director. She stated that if the topic of elder abuse is not directly addressed at the many conferences she attends, she brings it up. This is a result of her familiarity with the Block study. She also has written brief articles for local newspapers on elder abuse, citing the Block report. She has received many requests for the elder abuse sections of the report, which she copies and sends out. Finally, she includes the elder abuse sections in education and training packets for the agency's case workers.[47]

Uses by the Media

A final category of users for the two elder abuse studies consists of the media. In this category, we include mass media such as radio, television, and newspapers together with publications like the *Child Protection Report* that serve a limited audience with a much narrower focus of interest. It is clear that elder abuse generally, and the Maryland and the Michigan studies specifically, were "good copy." The media attention to these results far exceeded anything we observed in the earlier case studies of AoA-supported research.

Appendix A lists instances in which the print media covered the two studies. There are well over a dozen entries for each study, including several for newspapers with nationwide distribution. Because we relied primarily on the files of the principal investigators and made no special effort to search for additional citations, the list almost certainly is incomplete.

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[47]Telephone interview with Eliana Gil, San Francisco Child Abuse Council, San Francisco, California, October 22, 1981.

The vignette below illustrates how one of the more specialized publications used the work of the Maryland and Michigan teams.

Vignette #19

> The *CJE* (Criminal Justice and the Elderly) *Newsletter*, a quarterly publication of the CJE Project at the National Council of Senior Citizens, gave consistent coverage to elder abuse and the emerging research on the issue. After an initial article reporting on the Suzanne Steinmetz testimony before Congress in 1978, the Spring 1979 issue followed up with a notice of three newly funded projects in the area and listed contact persons for them. Two of these projects were the AoA studies; the third was the elder abuse project headed by James Bergman at Legal Research and Services for the Elderly in Boston. Information about these new efforts had come to CJE as a result of a "call for information" appended to its first article.
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> The newsletter subsequently ran articles on the findings of all three studies — with the Bergman research covered in Fall 1979 and the Maryland and Michigan work in the Spring 1980 issue. Again, people to contact for more information or copies of the studies were listed. A final article, that summer, reported on the June 1980 hearings of the House Select Committee on Aging.
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> The *CJE Newsletter* was published from 1978-80 with the support of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the Ford Foundation. It was distributed to a broad group, including researchers, law enforcement and criminal justice personnel, and numerous human service organizations and professionals with an interest in aging, crime prevention, and/or assistance to victims and witnesses of crime.[48]

In addition to the written coverage, both research teams have been much in demand for radio and television interviews. For example, between August 1979 and October 1980, Richard Douglass gave 11 interviews across the U.S. and Canada including one with *Radio Voice of America* that was aired worldwide in August 1980.[49] Similarly, Marilyn Block reported 19 appearances from December 1979 to August 1980 for radio and television stations from California to the District of Columbia.[50] Both Block and Douglass have served

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[48]Interview with Victoria H. Jaycox. Criminal Justice and the Elderly Project, National Council of Senior Citizens, Washington, D.C., November 16, 1981.

[49]Personal communication from Richard Douglass, October 8, 1980.

[50]Personal communication from Marilyn Block, September 19, 1980.

as consultants in the preparation of television segments on elder abuse, most notably, a 1980 episode of NBC's "Quincy."

Summary

The preceding vignettes provide evidence that the two elder abuse studies supported by Title IV-B have engendered many different uses at federal, state, and local levels. In addition to providing the mass media and many special purpose publications with copy, they have: provided materials or speakers for training and technical assistance conferences; aided in the development of legislation, program plans, and policy statements; contributed evidence to books and articles; and helped educate and sensitize providers of direct services to elder abuse. Not only the written products of the studies have been used, the researchers themselves have acted as resource persons and oral communicators of the findings. Although some types of utilization appeared more prevalent among certain types of users, many of our interviewees reported that they had found more than one way to use the research (for example, the service provider who used the reports to educate case workers, as well as to prepare a book).

Another common thread in the vignettes is the frequency with which users were involved, directly or as a byproduct of other activities, in further disseminating the elder abuse research beyond their immediate circle of co-workers. Reference to this sort of activity appears in over half the vignettes. By the same token, we note the great diversity of ways that the users themselves learned of the research — conferences, personal contact with the researchers, resource bibliographies, AoA publications or staff, the mass media, limited circulation newsletters, etc.[51]

Overall, the vignettes indicate that both of the AoA-funded studies of elder abuse are widely known and used. The next section examines the reasons for those successful utilization outcomes.

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[51]A number of interviewees could no longer pinpoint the original source of information about the studies, however.

C. WHY THE ELDER ABUSE STUDIES WERE USED

Earlier case studies of AoA's research produced a set of propositions about the conditions under which extensive research utilization is likely to occur:[52]

- First, successful utilization follows the development of an informal social network, linking knowledge producers (researchers) and knowledge users (consumers, service providers, and policymakers).
- Second, "interventions" designed to boost utilization occur throughout the life of a research project, and not merely at its completion.
- Third, utilization depends on the vigorous dissemination of project materials — but not necessarily of the final report.
- Fourth, utilization is facilitated when the research involves a "synthesis" and "development" activity.

The two AoA-sponsored studies of elder abuse differ markedly from our earlier cases in that they are *not* "development" efforts. Neither the Maryland nor the Michigan teams produced manuals or handbooks or other such tools that policymakers or practitioners could apply.[53]

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[52]See Case Studies No. 1-4.

[53]Both studies did test methods and develop instrumentation for doing research about elder abuse. Because utilization by other researchers is not our focus, we did not explore this aspect, although many researchers requested the final reports and the investigators believe that utilization of this sort did occur.

Instead, the projects were primarily "research" efforts. They produced research reports and papers containing new evidence about elder abuse as well as conceptual frameworks for understanding the phenomenon. In this respect, the elder abuse efforts may in fact be more typical of most applied social science research than the cases we have examined to date.

In effect then, the current case affords us an opportunity to examine the conditions for extensive utilization when research has yielded new information rather than tools. This section considers the evidence that bears on this issue. We begin by reviewing the applicability of the propositions from our earlier work. Then we consider two new propositions that gain tentative support from the current case.

Proposition No. 1: Successful utilization follows development of an informal social network, linking knowledge producers and knowledge users.

All of our earlier cases point out the importance of "networking" between users and researchers in accounting for high utilization. The significance of networking is twofold. First, it permits researchers and users to form interpersonal ties, to get to know one another and to set the stage for contacts that can extend beyond the formal grant period. Second, networking allows two-way communications to occur — researchers and users can ask questions of one another, and can mutually explore how well a particular product applies to a given user's policy or practices.[54] The history of the Maryland and Michigan efforts reveals several forms of personal interaction between the research teams and potential or actual users of their work:

1. The team at Michigan's Institute of Gerontology began a dialogue about elder abuse with policymakers and planners in the state of Michigan months before making application for AoA funds. Once AoA support was awarded, the project acquired additional funding from Michigan to expand and modify the research effort, to bring it more in line with the needs of state planners. Michigan was a primary recipient and user of the interim and final reports.

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[54]An expanded discussion of networking and its benefits can be found in Yin and Heinsohn, *Case Study No. 2*, pp. 29ff. As that discussion points out, many occasions for networking between users and researchers also have the benefit of encouraging greater communication and mutual assistance among users themselves.

2. Both projects had advisory boards that included potential users of the research. For the Maryland project, representatives of local agencies that serve elderly clients comprised the advisory board. The advisors to the Michigan team included representatives of the state office for the aging, the state department of social services (the sponsor), and two local social service agencies, as well as three persons drawn from The University of Michigan itself. Both boards met twice to review plans and progress. In Michigan, some members also acted individually as sounding boards for the team's ideas and/or reviewed early drafts of the final report.[55]

3. Block and Douglass also interacted with decisionmakers at AoA, especially in connection with AoA's follow-up activities. For example, both served on the review committees for the model project solicitation regarding elder abuse (and both, incidentally, let the research division know their misgivings about undertaking action programs when the knowledge base is still so limited). At another point, the research division consulted Douglass about AoA's plans for a Clearinghouse publication on elder abuse. Block and Douglass both were asked to participate in the AoA-sponsored conferences on elder abuse, and Block served as an advisor to Legal Research and Services for the Elderly, AoA's contractor for the conference effort.[56]

4. Most significant of all in terms of scope of interaction, the two research teams made nearly 40 presentations of their findings in a wide variety of forums (exclusive of the media). For both the Maryland and the Michigan projects, this activity really blossomed with the completion of the final reports. Participation in conferences and legislative hearings brought the researchers and their findings to a much wider audience than did the other forms of interaction. Both teams made presentations to professional associations like the Gerontological Society, which have a large representation of policymakers and practitioners in their membership. Both participated in national and regional conferences on elder abuse and both provided testimony to state and/or local groups investigating policy and program

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[55]Telephone interview with Elizabeth Ferguson, Developmental Disabilities Council, Lansing, Michigan, October 22, 1981.

[56]Interviews with Marilyn Block, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, August 20, 1981 and Richard Douglass, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, September 16, 1981.

alternatives. Each of these occasions provided opportunities for interpersonal connections to form.

It is difficult to weigh the exact contribution of each of the networking activities to the eventual utilization of the elder abuse research. The contacts with AoA and with advisors and policymakers in Michigan evidently produced some direct results — helping to stimulate some program and training activities in the one case and informing legislative and program efforts to protect vulnerable adults in the other. It seems clear, however, that the conferences and hearings were exceedingly important. Many of our interviewees for the vignettes mentioned having met members of one or both research teams or learned of their work through these conferences or contacts with other attendees.

More generally, our interviewing and other data collection demonstrated that an informal network of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who are interested in elder abuse does now exist. This network has the potential to link additional users with the Maryland and Michigan teams. Nearly all of the users we interviewed knew the researchers by name and often recalled their university affiliations. Many users also volunteered the names of others associated with elder abuse research, policy, or programs. We believe a newcomer to the topic of elder abuse would need to make no more than two or three exploratory phone calls before getting a referral to Block and Douglass for further information. From a review of project files, it is also clear that Block and Douglass have already served as resources for a variety of practitioners, policymakers, and other researchers who have contacted them individually.[57]

Proposition No. 2: Interventions to promote utilization occur throughout the course of the project, rather than only at the end.

Early networking and dissemination can be important means of promoting the utilization of research because they provide an opportunity for researchers to learn what will best meet the needs of users and incorporate it in their ap-

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[57]Another interesting dimension to this resource role was noted. The Maryland team had several documented inquiries from concerned relatives or abused older persons who were seeking assistance from project staff. The Michigan team also reported similar calls, including some from abusers themselves who wanted help. Both teams referred these persons to appropriate public agencies.

proach. These activities also build an audience for the "final" results that are yet to come.

Early steps to promote utilization do not seem, however, to have been particularly salient in the history of either elder abuse project. The research teams did have some early contacts with users who belonged to their advisory boards, provided data for analysis, or provided funding (in the Michigan case). Each team made an occasional presentation about their work in progress before task forces or legislative committees looking at adult protective issues. But with the exception of the Douglass and Hickey contacts with Michigan policymakers (see Vignette #6), these early interactions with users do not appear to have had an impact on the final products of the research. Nor were they nearly as important in informing various audiences about the research as the teams' involvement in conferences, testimony, and media coverage, once the research efforts were over.

In addition, neither project did any "early" dissemination. No doubt this was partly a function of the brief time frames for these efforts. Both produced final reports within 15 months of the original award, and the first presentations of the findings to national audiences took place when these final reports were already in draft. This proposition appears to be considerably less important to the utilization of knowledge-producing research (at least as represented by these two studies) than to the utilization of newly developed techniques or tools.

Proposition No. 3: Utilization depends on vigorous dissemination of the project's products (but not necessarily the final report).

Responsibility for dissemination of the written products of the elder abuse studies fell primarily to the researchers themselves. This contrasts with some of our earlier cases in which AoA arranged for government printing of the products and then took on the primary responsibility for large direct mailings and responding to requests. For these studies, AoA's efforts were limited to the Clearinghouse publication on *Elder Abuse, Older American News,* and *Aging,* as noted earlier.

The two teams diverged somewhat in their approaches to dissemination, although both took advantage of their universities' public information capabilities to prepare press releases on their findings.

The Maryland team had earmarked funds for printing and disseminating the final research report in the original proposal to AoA. These funds enabled them to print 4,000 copies of the report and undertake direct mailings to state agencies on aging, AoA regional offices, and a number of national associations. Availability of the report, free of charge, was also announced in several journals. Because of the abundant supply of final reports, the Maryland team has not made a practice of disseminating other products, like conference papers or drafts of book chapters. Two book chapters are now in press, however.

The Michigan team had not budgeted project funds for printing the final report or subsidizing its distribution.[58] This constrained the dissemination of this product. To save costs, the Michigan team now responds to most requests for information with excerpts of the report, related book chapters, or papers from the conferences and workshops at which they made presentations. The full report is made available to those who are willing to pay the copying charges. In addition, the library at the Institute of Gerontology has photocopied and distributed a number of copies of the full report and some conference papers.

Another mode of dissemination for the Michigan products has been the inclusion of report excerpts or other materials in packets prepared for workshops or conferences where the team has made presentations.[59] The Michigan team has also published its findings in professional journals — the researcher's traditional mode of dissemination. (Two book chapters and another article by the Michigan team are still in press.) The journals chosen, the *Gerontologist* and the *American Journal of Public Health,* both reach beyond

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[58]Douglass explained that it is not his usual practice to set aside a printing budget in his research proposals, because he prefers to concentrate on investing in the research itself. He also noted that the team had been hoping to receive AoA funds to continue work on a validation study, and intended to reserve vigorous dissemination efforts for the more definitive results that such a study would produce. When the team learned its application for new funds had been denied (in September 1979), it was already too late to make major reallocations since the current budget was nearly exhausted. (Interview with Richard Douglass, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, September 16, 1981.)

[59]For example, reprints of a Douglass and Hickey article on the findings (from the April 1981 *Gerontologist*) were provided to all those enrolled in a workshop on elder abuse in Chicago, Illinois. (Interview with Jane McClure, Bi-Regional Older Americans Advocacy Assistance Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan, September 16, 1981.)

academe to a rather broad audience of policymakers and practitioners.[60] Douglass also published an article in the university's alumni magazine in March 1980.

Both teams have relied mostly on "passive" dissemination approaches (i.e., they have responded to requests for copies of the report, rather than undertaking large unsolicited direct mailings to potential users of the findings). They have, however, managed to get large numbers of copies into the field in this way — several thousand copies in the case of the Block and Sinnott report, several hundred in the case of the Douglass, Hickey, and Noël report and related products. We are unable to say from our evidence whether the greater distribution of the Block and Sinnott report led to any greater utilization.

As noted in Section B, an informal dissemination process also operated for both projects, with many users involved in sharing the products with others. This was mentioned frequently enough in our interviews to suggest that it was a significant adjunct to the formal dissemination efforts of the researchers. Even more important, the mass media shared the findings with a very broad audience, some of whom went on to acquire the written products from the investigators. None of the projects in the earlier cases we examined enjoyed a comparable advantage in terms of media assistance with the dissemination process.

Overall, then, the third proposition appears extremely relevant to the elder abuse studies. There was vigorous dissemination of the written products by the researchers themselves and of the findings by the media and AoA as well.

Proposition No. 4: Utilization is facilitated when the research involves a "synthesis" and "development" activity.

We consider this proposition only briefly, since the elder abuse research does not fall in the development category. It is worth mentioning, however, that both the Maryland and Michigan studies did include a synthesis component. AoA's original grant solicitation had emphasized the need for a review of the literature on maltreatment of the elderly and its

[60]Although none of the users that we interviewed mentioned these publications, this may be a function of the fact that we selected their names from project mailing lists and correspondence files, most of which antedated the publication of the journal articles (April and May 1981 respectively).

linkages to work on other abused populations like women and children. Both research teams delivered this, although literature review formed a more substantial share of the Maryland report than of the Michigan report. The latter devoted more space to the researchers' field work. To our knowledge, no such reviews existed prior to these reports. Two practitioners specifically referred to the value of the literature reviews in the Block and Sinnott volume (see Vignettes #17 and #18). We suspect that other interviewees who told us that the research provided useful "background" were also referring in part to the utility of the reviews.

Other Significant Determinants of Utilization: New Propositions

The evidence shows that the Michigan and Maryland teams did interact extensively with potential users of their research, particularly through such mechanisms as workshops and conferences. Their products, which included syntheses of the literature, were also disseminated widely. By themselves, however, these factors alone do not provide a compelling explanation for the extensive utilization of the projects. We offer two additional propositions that appear to fit the facts in this case.

Proposition No. 5: Utilization will occur when there already exists a large audience of policymakers and practitioners with a strong interest in the topic and a desire to do something about it.

In the case of the elder abuse research, there was a high degree of interest in the topic and a strong demand for the information generated by the researchers. Although the researchers did indeed further stimulate the demand for information with their activities and products, they did not originate it. The fact that "passive" approaches to dissemination succeeded so well in this instance depended on having an audience who wanted the products badly enough to ask for them.

At least two ingredients of this demand are particularly noteworthy for the elder abuse projects. One involves the key role of the mass media. As we noted in Sections A and B, the elder abuse projects generated considerable media attention. Media interest in the results started almost from the day of completion of the reports, and continues even now. Aside from arranging for press releases on their work,

neither research team made any other special efforts to reach the mass media. The researchers simply made themselves available when an interview was requested. Yet the requests were frequent, especially in the early months. Stories about elder abuse had dramatic potential. Media exposure presumably was important in reaching and introducing the general public to a "new problem," but it also brought waves of new requests for the written results from policymakers, practitioners, and other researchers.

Another ingredient of the demand for the elder abuse findings was their timeliness. The release of the results of the two studies, late in 1979, coincided with a growing concern about elder abuse among policymakers. At the same time, the knowledge base about the issue was very low. The timing of the elder abuse studies was not an accident, of course. In fact AoA had sponsored the research in part to fill just such a need for information — more specifically, to better inform the policy debate in Congress and elsewhere that was sparked by the 1978 Steinmetz testimony. In making awards for exploratory work to the Maryland and Michigan teams, AoA was assuming that the audience would still be there a year later, when the results came in. AoA's assumption proved to be correct.

In many respects, the emergence of elder abuse as a policy issue parallels the process described by Fay Lomax Cook for the emergence of criminal victimization of the elderly on the policy agenda in the 1970's.[61] Cook argues that "crime against the elderly" easily found a place on policy agendas because:

- It was a "conflict free" issue — i.e., no one was unsympathetic to it.
- The climate was "ripe," in that the issue was linked with others that were already high on policy agendas (like the problems of crime, victims, and the elderly).
- Thus, it was a "good" issue for politicians and the media.
- Many different groups — "convergent voices" — articulated the issue at the same time.

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[61]Fay Lomax Cook, "Crime and the Elderly: The Emergence of a Policy Issue," in Dan Lewis (Ed.), *Reactions to Crime*, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1981.

Cook describes a four-state "convergent voice model" of agenda-setting under these conditions. In her model, the media, congressional committees, federal agencies, interest groups, practitioners, and researchers all play a role at various stages. But key roles are posited for social scientists especially at the last two stages, after the issue climate is formed (Stage 1) and multiple sources have placed the issue on the policy agenda (Stage 2). Then, social science findings may help to legitimate the issue (Stage 3), by documenting the dimensions of a problem heretofore known mainly through anecdotal evidence or media coverage. Researchers at this stage interact with public officials, media, and interest groups, whose involvement in the issue also lends it legitimacy. Later on research continues to be important, when policy and program alternatives come to be seriously debated (Stage 4).

A review of the facts of the elder abuse case shows many similarities — elder abuse, too, was a "conflict-free topic," attractive to legislators and newspaper reporters, and of concern to many groups. In this case, the issue was linked not only to crime, victims, and elderly, but to a more recent public interest in domestic violence, child abuse, and maltreatment of persons in institutions. Within the aging network, the existence of legal services and ombudsman services programs or specialists in most state and many area agencies on aging also contributed to the "issue climate."[62] These programs reflected prior emphases within AoA and the Older Americans Act on protecting the rights of older persons, including those in institutions. Elder abuse in domestic settings would prove a natural extension of their earlier concerns. In this context, the Steinmetz testimony in Congress, the attendant media coverage, and the adoption of the elder abuse program by the Select Committee on Aging together helped bring elder abuse to the policy agenda.

As in Cook's model, the two elder abuse studies (and other research on elder abuse) came into play at a later stage of agenda-setting, as part of legitimating the issue and considering alternative policy and program responses. In funding the Maryland and Michigan work, AoA was seeking more systematic documentation of the elder abuse problems. Indeed, many of our vignettes confirm that policymakers at

[62]We use the term "aging network" to encompass AoA, regional offices, state and area agencies on aging, service providers, and associations with a predominantly aged clientele or membership.

various levels sought out the Maryland and Michigan results to help define or justify the extent of the problem they faced. For example:

- Staff of the House Select Committee on Aging used the results of both studies in briefing the members and also cited the Michigan work in a report that attempted to assess the scope of the problem (see Vignette #3).
- Michigan planners found academic substantiation for the results of the state's internal efforts to document maltreatment of adults and to plan appropriate responses (see Vignette #6).
- In Wisconsin the results — or rather their tentative and incomplete nature — also shaped a decision to seek legislation aimed at gathering better documentation of the problem (see Vignette #7).
- The National Retired Teachers Association/American Association of Retired Persons used the Block and Sinnott research to help develop an official policy statement that remains open-minded about the true magnitude of the problem (see Vignette #5).

These are illustrative of Stage 3 applications.

Our data do not tell how, if at all, these projects shaped specific program approaches to preventing or treating elder abuse. Many of the practitioners we interviewed explained that the research had provided useful background or helped educate staff, rather than influencing specific program decisions. We must also note, however, that Block and Douglass often participated in forums where such decisions were at issue — for example, in AoA's decisions about model projects (Vignette #2), in AoA-sponsored training conferences and other workshops on elder abuse (see Vignette #1 and Appendix A), and in local task forces (see Vignettes #14 and #15). Our methods of data collection were not suitable for assessing the more subtle kinds of impacts that might result from participation in such activities.

Proposition No. 6: Utilization is facilitated when the findings of a single study have been confirmed by other researchers.

Another significant influence on the utilization of the Maryland and Michigan studies is simply the fact that there were *two* studies. It was largely coincidental that the two research teams pursued complementary research strategies, each with a distinct regional rather than national focus. But the fact that similar findings came from two different parts of the country at about the same time and were elicited by different research strategies was a powerful impetus to utilization. A single study might more easily have been set aside as a purely local aberration. One user explicitly noted the importance of this complementarity in our interview.[63] We also noted from our other interviews that many users appeared to be familiar with both studies.

Furthermore, AoA's research did not stand completely alone. Other research efforts, also limited in geographic scope, were generating similar kinds of conclusions, and it was not uncommon for interviewees to say that other studies in the elder abuse literature had been useful. Judging from the elder abuse case, the products of a single effort would be at a particular disadvantage in terms of utilization when there is little knowledge base in an area and no cumulative line of research within which to place the findings. This pattern is, in fact, consistent with an observation that appears elsewhere in the literature on research utilization: that the findings contained in a single research report seldom meet the needs of the user adequately.[64]

Summary

The extensive networking and dissemination activities of the elder abuse teams — particularly their frequent presentations at conferences, workshops, and hearings — and the widespread distribution of their written products contributed to substantial utilization of the research. Both of these elements proved important in earlier case studies as

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[63]Telephone interview with Kathleen Gardner, U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Aging, Washington, D.C., October 30, 1981.

[64]For example, see Carol H. Weiss, "The Many Meanings of Research Utilization," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 39 (September/October 1979), pp. 426-431, and Robert K. Yin, *R&D Utilization by Local Services: Problems and Proposals for Further Research*, Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 1976.

well. The inclusion of a synthesis component in both studies, which is a third commonality with earlier cases, also may have facilitated utilization to some degree. But the evidence suggests that there were two additional ingredients of successful utilization in the case of the elder abuse research: first, the existence of a large audience of policymakers and practitioners that needed and wanted more information about the topic, and second, the fact that there were two studies rather than one. The timeliness of the reports and the extensive media coverage that they were accorded both are factors in understanding how the findings reached the audience that already existed, and how that audience grew further. These considerations form the basis for adding two new propositions about research utilization to our original set of four.

In the next section, we consider the policy implications of our findings for AoA and other research funding agencies.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

We have seen that two of the earlier propositions (Nos. 1 and 3) have definite parallels in the history of these projects, while the other two do not. We have also developed two new propositions, as follows:

- Proposition No. 5: Utilization will occur when there already exists a large audience of policymakers and practitioners with a strong interest in the topic and a desire to do something about it.
- Proposition No. 6: Utilization is facilitated when the findings of a single study have been confirmed by other researchers.

Regarding Proposition No. 5, we found that the utilization of the research findings occurred in the context of a larger process of agenda-setting that created a demand for information about elder abuse among policymakers, practitioners, and the media. Elder abuse was already the subject of discussion in Congress and in some states when the studies were released. The level of prior research knowledge about the topic was very low, however. The new evidence helped to legitimate elder abuse as an issue for serious policy and programmatic attention. In fact, AoA had recognized the potential role of new information in this context when it commissioned the elder abuse studies. The media coverage attending release of the two reports and the related activities of the researchers further fed the demand for the products.

This proposition may be more important for research projects than development projects, but it is not limited to the former. Audience demand and the timing of research in relation to it have helped to explain utilization also in one of the

earlier cases. In essence, audience differentials helped to account for substantial variations in the use of two products from the same research effort.[65] The repetition of this pattern in the elder abuse studies reassures us about the merit of our new propositions.

The earlier case also suggested that there can be a strong relationship between audience factors and the level of effort required to successfully promote utilization. We cannot adequately test the relationship in the elder abuse case, but we are inclined to believe that considerable utilization would have resulted, even without the extensive networking activities of the research teams.

Regarding Proposition No. 6, we found that the availability of multiple evidence on the same issue at the same time lent greater credibility to each of these efforts. Though both studies were exploratory and made no claims to be definitive, users could find reassurance from the consistency of the results. This was further reinforced by the release of other research in the elder abuse area, and (we speculate) by efforts such as AoA's Clearinghouse publication, which drew attention to the convergence of findings on the topic.

Implications

In our earlier case studies of "development" efforts, we drew two policy implications that, based on the findings of the current case, should be extended to research efforts as well. In modified form, these are:

- Utilization strategies should *focus on linking people and organizations, not just products,* and vigorously encourage networking activities through the life history of a project.
- Research funding agencies must vigorously *support dissemination of project materials* to audiences other than researchers.

We examine both of these briefly below and then turn to several additional implications suggested by the present case. (A third implication from the earlier cases — that research sponsors should assign responsibility for answering questions about and preparing revisions of the products in which they have invested — does not appear to fit the knowledge-producing projects. Research reports do not re-

[65]Cronin and Heinsohn, *Case Study No. 4*, pp. 18-19, 25.

quire revision in the way that manuals or other tools may. Research findings may be contradicted or amplified by later evidence and analysis, but conventionally that results in a new report, not in a modification of an old one.)

Linking people and organizations, not just products. The findings support our earlier suggestion that AoA and other research-funding agencies should encourage networking and two-way communications for all their R&D efforts. In part, this may mean formally endorsing the use of professional meetings and similar settings to present findings. In part, it may mean creating additional forums for bringing researchers and users together face-to-face, as AoA did in this case by funding two national conferences on the subject. This is an expensive strategy, of course, and one that might be used sparingly. Less expensive approaches include sponsoring "research-in-progress" sessions at professional meetings, which are explicitly designed to permit researchers and users to meet before the research has been completed,[66] or setting aside special support for researchers to attend workshops and conferences, either in the original project budget or as a follow-up. Research-funding agencies might also consider the extent of early networking with users that is desirable when they establish overall time frames for research or development efforts. When networking is not an intrinsic part of the effort, it is apt to require additional time.

Disseminating project materials. Formal research reports and "spin-offs" like conference papers and book chapters are likely to be of considerable interest when a research effort has produced new information. (We have found that these sorts of products are less likely to be of widespread interest in the case of development efforts.)

Although both of the elder abuse research teams were successful in getting their project materials into the field, their experiences do pose some issues for research sponsors. As we saw also in some of our earlier cases, the full force of demand for the research products of the elder abuse studies came after AoA funding had expired. One of the projects had included printing and dissemination costs in its grant request; the other had not. Neither team had any guidance from AoA on the matter; each seems to have followed its own inclinations.

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[66]The Gerontological Research Institute has been cooperating with AoA in conducting such sessions, on an experimental basis.

The fact that these two teams bore the burden of dissemination reasonably well should not deter AoA from developing a more consistent policy about the printing and dissemination of the products it sponsors. Research-funding agencies have a variety of options, including printing and disseminating the materials themselves (through GPO), awarding special dissemination resources to selected projects at or near completion, or encouraging (or requiring) grantees to set aside funds for the purpose. Researchers should be told which of these options is likely to apply to them.

The utilization experience of these studies also suggests a number of additional implications for research sponsors:

- *Research sponsors should consider the probable level of audience interest in and need for the products in planning utilization strategies for them.*

We recognize that it is difficult to project the probable demand for new information or tools accurately. But even gross judgments can help to inform decisions — to pursue active rather than passive dissemination strategies, for example. Low "baseline" interest in a topic that the sponsor considers extremely important may indicate the need for vigorous and multifaceted approaches to finding or creating an audience. If the demand for information is expected to be high, in contrast, planning might focus on seeing that there is adequate capacity (in terms of personnel, copies of documents, etc.) to meet it. Although the staff of research-funding agencies and the research teams themselves can generally be expected to have some feeling for the demand factor, in some instances it may be advisable to query outside experts — policymakers, practitioners and other researchers — about the potential audiences for the products and ways of reaching them. In agencies that have mechanisms in place for obtaining outside reviews of projects, this is generally one function of the review process.

- *Sponsors should make use of press releases that provide a clear statement of research findings (in non-technical language) and of their potential significance.*

This was an eminently effective strategy for the elder abuse projects, both of which initiated the press releases on their own. One potential problem, however, is that not all projects are lodged in organizations like the University of

Maryland or The University of Michigan, which have an in-house capability for writing press releases and the machinery for targeting their distribution. A second is that researchers may make unwarranted claims for their own findings, or perhaps fail to recognize their full implications. To avoid such problems, research sponsors should consider assuming a share of the responsibility for preparing and distributing press releases on their research products. This alternative raises one issue, however. Should the sponsor screen the research for which it handles press releases, given that the release may be perceived as an agency endorsement of the results? Agencies which have mechanisms in place for reviewing their completed research might consider linking the decision about a press release to the outcome of the review process.

- *Sponsors should encourage research teams to routinely identify Congressional committees and national associations with a potential interest in the outcome of their research and keep them informed of its progress.*

This particular form of networking seems to have produced good results in the elder abuse case. Sponsors can help by brokering relationships and issuing research bulletins of their own. Research sponsors can also assist by identifying others (for example, program or training staff) within their own agencies who may wish to follow the research effort. In the current case, the links to AoA staff outside the research division seem to have been indirect.

- *Research findings should be publicized and disseminated in ways that link the results to other contemporaneous efforts on the topic area or to prior lines of research.*

Funding syntheses of past research and practice or requiring grantees to include a synthesis component with new empirical work are worthy efforts to increase utilization in their own right. But these are relatively expensive approaches. A brief, simple, and straightforward summary of the findings of three or four studies on the same topic, akin to AoA's Clearinghouse publication on *Elder Abuse,* may help meet the need. An even simpler strategy would be to append citations of key related AoA (or other) efforts in progress or already completed to press releases, project summaries, or other documents that report on single efforts. The case of elder abuse studies suggests that many users will

synthesize on their own, especially if information about the other cited efforts is readily accessible.

- *Research sponsors should consider the merits of multiple awards on a single topic, particularly when the work is exploratory.*

This strategy looks at the "front end" of utilization planning, when research agendas are being established and before any awards have even been made. Funding two elder abuse studies was not part of AoA's original plan, but the change was a happy one in terms of future utilization payoffs. AoA's research guidelines indeed have often permitted multiple awards under a single issue area. AoA should consider regularly adopting this approach when new ground is being broken.

With the exception of the last implication, we think these new implications can be meaningfully extended to all of AoA's sponsored research, whether oriented to the production of new information or tools. However, we have begged one important question. This concerns the desirability of promoting utilization and dissemination in every instance.

In the current case, for example, the research was admittedly exploratory and the findings tentative. How much should an agency encourage the use of such research? To some extent, both sponsors and researchers "lose control" of the interpretations of their research findings, once they are widely disseminated; this happens under any circumstances, but findings may be more subject to misuse or misinterpretation when they are exploratory. Agencies also face the reality that some research is just poorly done, and some reports draw conclusions not justified by the evidence. The consequences of widely disseminating such work may range from unnecessary or even harmful policy and program decisions to public embarrassment for the sponsor.

For these reasons, as well as inevitable limitations on agency resources, it may behoove funding agencies to work toward a comprehensive process for reviewing completed research. In such a process, the results of outside reviews (if available) and internal staff judgments about the products can contribute to coordinated decisions about when and if further research on the topic is needed, whether program or training responses are indicated, and how large an investment in utilization and dissemination the products merit.

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FOR CASE STUDY

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APPENDIX A
MICHIGAN STUDY

Publications

Douglass, Richard L. "A Study of Maltreatment." *Michigan Alumnus,* March, 1980.

Hickey, Tom, & Douglass, Richard L. "Neglect and Abuse of Older Family Members: Professionals' Perspectives and Case Experiences." *The Gerontologist,* Vol. 21, No. 2 (April 1981), 171-176.

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Douglass, Richard L., & Noël, Catherine. "Neglect and Abuse of the Elderly in Michigan." *Michigan Academician,* Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, Vol. 14, No. 3, forthcoming 1982.

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Conference Papers, Presentations, and Testimony

Douglass, Richard L. "Domestic Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly." Keynote Address to Seminar for Protecive Services to the Aged. United Way of Metropolitan Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, October 10, 1979.

_____. "Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly: Research, Casefinding, Legislation, and Intervention." Paper presented at the 107th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, New York, November 1979.

Hickey, Tom, "A Developmental Model of Maltreatment and Abuse of the Elderly." Paper presented at the 107th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, New York, November 1979.

Douglass, Richard L. "A Study of Neglect and Abuse of the Elderly in Michigan." Paper presented at the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society, Washington, D.C., November 28, 1979.

Hickey, Tom. "A Developmental Model of the Etiology of Domestic Maltreatment of the Elderly." Paper presented at the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society, Washington, D.C., November 1979.

Douglass, Richard L. Testimony to RSVP Task Force on Senior Citizen Abuse, Inkster, Michigan, April 13, 1980.

_____. Testimony to Area Agency on Aging, Task Force on Abuse and Neglect, Toledo, Ohio, June 5, 1980.

_____. "Characteristics of a Newly Recognized Phenomenon: Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly." Panelist for Aging Abuse Alert Forum, Mercy College of Detroit, Detroit, Michigan, June 1980.

_____. "The Abuse and Neglect Project: Methods and Findings." Research Seminar Series, Institute of Gerontology, The University of Michigan, August 1980.

_____. Testimony to State of Michigan Senate Subcommittee on Social Services, regarding Senate Bill, 1980, No. 318, Mandatory Reporting of Neglect and Abuse of the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Adults, September 24, 1980.

_____. Testimony to Governor's Task Force on the Handicapped, Commission for the Protection and Advocacy for the Developmentally Disabled, Indianapolis, Indiana, October 9, 1980.

_____. Testimony to Commission on the Aging and the Aged, regarding Draft of an Indiana Adult Protective Services Act, Indianapolis, Indiana, October 10, 1980.

_____. "The Etiology of Neglect and Abuse of Older Persons." Presentation to Tennessee Conference on the Abuse of Older Persons, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, December 3, 1980.

_____. "Adult Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation." Paper presented at Bi-Regional Older Americans Advocacy Assistance Center Workshop on Issues and Strategies for Legislative Advocacy: Prepared for the General Assembly, State of Indiana, December 9, 1980.

_____. "A Systems Perspective for Service Delivery Planning for Domestic Neglect and Abuse of the Elderly." Paper presented at the Region X ADAMHA-AoA Joint Workshop on Training in Detection of Elderly Abuse, Portland, Oregon, January 29-30, 1981. (Available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, U.S. Department of Justice, Rockville, Maryland 20850.)

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_____. Workshop on Family Violence, Midland Hospital Center, Midland, Michigan, April 15, 1981.

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